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SUBJECT: ROYAL THAI POLICE EFFORTS TO ENHANCE NATIONAL AIRPORT SECURITY

¶11. (U) BEGIN SUMMARY - For eight days during late November and into early December 2008, political protesters in Bangkok took seizure of both major national airports, stranding tourists, local citizens and traveling business people in Bangkok, and restricting those travelers attempting to return to Bangkok from getting home. The implications associated with not just an action of this magnitude but the fact it went on for so many days, caused a great deal of outside scrutiny, criticism and fear that the Royal Thai Police (RTP) were not capable of protecting their most essential national elements. This international awareness and criticism logically generated bi-lateral discussions between the various foreign missions including the U.S. Ambassador who led the way with a strong voice of concern, and numerous Royal Thai Government (RTG) Ministries and contacts. As a result, the Royal Thai Police reached out to the U.S. Mission Bangkok RSO Office and requested assistance designing a training program to "fix" their airport security. Those efforts have now begun to generate action in the form of RTP Training Conferences and DS/ATA creating a major new training course that will utilize multi-agency knowledge, skills and experience. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (U) During December 2008, the RSO participated in several meetings with his highest-ranking RTP contacts, where the RSO voiced his concern over the possibility that the lack of "crowd control" the airports had experienced, might spill over to the sea ports or even the water and power institutions, which with food, water and power being affected, would or could literally be life-safety disasters. The RTP stated they were aware of this consideration and were reviewing existing controls but were confident in the security measures in-place. Then, in April 2009, the four-star Deputy Commissioner General of the RTP and his three-star RTP "number 2," called the RSO and asked him to come to a "business lunch" to discuss some matters regarding airport security. Since this seemed like an exceptional opportunity, the RSO quickly agreed and advised them he would also bring the Post TSA Representative as a subject-matter expert on airports. The topic of the lunch turned out to be a request for the RSO to provide the RTP with information on methods and systems for properly protecting their airports. The enormous window of opportunity seemed as huge as the topic itself. The RSO began by telling them that the subject they wanted addressed would probably require insight from several agencies/organizations in the USG. The RSO spent the next two hours describing the many areas that would need to be addressed and how complex it might become, but assured them we would do everything possible to make this happen.

¶13. (U) RSO Bangkok contacted DS/ATA immediately and they began evaluation of the request. DS/ATA, true to their exceptional responsiveness both on the regional management level and from ATA managerial oversight, quickly recognized the advantages of pursuing this request and a new Airport Security Training Course is currently underway with the initial evaluation team due in Thailand between July 27 to 31, 2009.

¶14. (U) The RTP are very encouraged by the USG responsiveness to their request but much to their own credit, they have also begun in-house airport security training to create the proper

mindset for those police who will be actively involved with the DS/ATA upcoming training program. On June 10, 2009, RTP Deputy Commissioner General Wichien Poteposri sat as the President of a preparation meeting for an in-house airport security training series with a table-top exercise. In this preparation meeting there were over 70 high-ranking RTP and others from various concerned RTG agencies including 5 Provincial Police Bureaus, the Central Investigation Bureau, the Metropolitan Police Bureau, the Police Education Bureau, the airport management entity AOT, the Counter-terrorism Operation Center (CTOC), various Provincial Governors, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Defense. The Senior FSNI for Mission, who has an exceptional relationship with the Police establishment, will also serve as an instructor for the week-long conferences on the topic of the necessity of proper Public Relations during such crises. The schedule for the RTP Airport Security conferences has been set and has begun:

- June 29-July 03, 2009 - Chiang Mai International Airport (The RSO attended the official opening ceremony as the only foreign guest invited to the event. RSO also took the new RSO Chiang Mai for contact establishment)
- July 03-07, 2009 - Suvarnabhumi International Airport, Bangkok.
- August 10-14, 2009 - Khon Kaen Airport, Khon Kaen Province
- August 24-28, 2009 - Phuket International Airport, Phuket Province

**15.** (U) Following some serious frustration and fear in the aftermath of the prior airport seizures, Mission and RSO are encouraged and hopeful that we may be part of a substantive upgrading of security for the five principal airports in Thailand, the fifth being Don Muang located in Bangkok as well. The support of DS/ATA is greatly appreciated.

JOHN